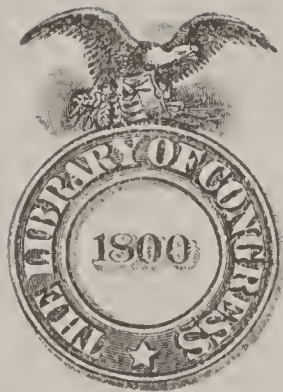


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Promotion of Certain Retired Army Officers

HEARING

BEFORE THE

U.S. Congress, Senate,

COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS.

UNITED STATES SENATE

SIXTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 3192

FOR THE PROMOTION OF CERTAIN OFFICERS OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMY NOW ON THE RETIRED LIST

APRIL 28, 1922

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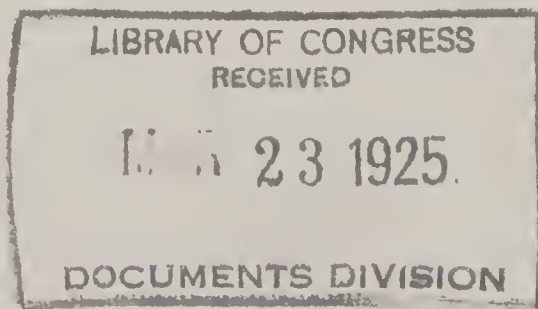
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PROMOTION OF CERTAIN RETIRED ARMY OFFICERS.

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 1922.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C.

The committee met at 10.30 o'clock a. m. in the committee room, Capitol, Senator Wadsworth (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, the committee has before it this morning a bill introduced by Senator Calder, S. 3192, for the promotion of certain officers of the United States Army now on the retired list.

The bill is very short and it may be inserted in the record.

(The bill is here printed in full, as follows:)

[S. 3192, Sixty-seventh Congress, second session.]

"A BILL For the promotion of certain officers of the United States Army now on the retired list.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States, in his discretion, he, and he hereby is, authorized to appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to the next higher grade any officer not above the grade of colonel now on the retired list of the Army or who may hereafter be retired who has served with exceptional efficiency as a commissioned officer on the active list for over forty years, participating in actual field service against hostile Indians, the Spanish-American War, has been awarded either a medal of honor, a distinguished-service medal, or has been brevetted for gallantry in action against hostile Indians, and has served in France in the World War, been cited for exceptionally meritorious and conspicuous or distinguished services in such war, and before retirement was repeatedly recommended for promotion to the grade of brigadier general."

The CHAIRMAN. General Harbord is here. The committee has asked him to come this morning to ask him his views on this particular bill and, perhaps, to have the advantage of discussion with him on the general situation of promotion on the retired list of officers who distinguished themselves in the last war, as this bill would rather tend to bring up that question in a general way.

General Harbord, the committee will be very glad to have you discuss this bill in any way that you see fit.

STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. J. G. HARBORD, UNITED STATES ARMY.

General HARBORD. The effect this bill will have will be to promote on the retired list, either now or eventually, some four officers of the Army, of whom two are now on the retired list, and two shortly will be there. The four officers are Col. W. J. Nicholson, Col. Lloyd M. Brett, who are now on the retired list, and Col. John B. McDonald, and Col. Thomas B. Dugan, who will be on the retired list not later than January next.

These officers are all known to me and have been for a good many years. Colonel Nicholson entered the service in 1876; Colonel Brett entered the service in 1879, a graduate. Colonel Dugan entered the service in 1882, and Colonel McDonald in 1881. They are all men who have taken part actively in the Indian Wars, the Spanish American War, and each of them commanded a brigade in the recent war; each of them has been decorated, either by the Medal of Honor or by the Distinguished Service Medal for his efficiency, and each of them has at various times been recommended for the grade of brigadier general.

I happen to know, in the cases of Colonel Brett and Colonel Nicholson, that it was very much in the mind of the former Secretary of War, Mr. Baker, to promote them before they retired. I went to see him in behalf of Colonel Nicholson who was then, in January of 1920, about to be retired. Secretary Baker believed that these men should be given the grade of brigadier general before retirement. But it happened at that time that he was confronted with a situation in which there were eight colonels of the Army who were to be retired within a few months, beginning with Colonel Nicholson in January, and ending before the end of the year. There were eight colonels, not all of them of the same quality and efficiency of service of these men, but, nevertheless deserving men, who had reached the grade of colonel, and that matter appeared before him as a collective problem. He felt that if he started to promote any one of those eight that he would probably be under the necessity of carrying it through. He said he could not afford to do it because he did not believe it was the intention of Congress that he should use a vacancy in the grade of brigadier general to leapfrog these men through to the retired list, but that he would be very much in favor of some legislation by Congress which would enable them to be retired. I believe the present Secretary of War feels the same way about it and reported favorably on the bill.

Senator WARREN. Did any of them, during the World War, have charge of divisions or serve for any time as division commanders?

General HARBORD. I do not recall that either of them served as division commanders in the active operations on the front line. Colonel Nicholson commanded a division here in the United States before he went over—the Seventy-ninth Division, of which General Kuhn was commander, and he was absent for some time.

Colonel Dugan commanded a division after the armistice and brought it home. That may probably be true of Colonels Brett and McDonald; I am not familiar as to that; but each of these men did reach the front line as brigade commanders and all of them did well. I know in the autumn of 1918 or 1919, I do not recall which, General Pershing, knowing the time of retirement to be approaching for Colonels Brett and Nicholson, sent a cablegram recommending that they be given the grade of brigadier general before retirement. But it was not considered practicable to do it by the War Department.

Senator WARREN. That was true of a great many officers, was it not; that they were recommended for promotion but the department here declined to promote them?

General HARBORD. That was true, of course, of literally hundreds of officers at the time of the armistice; but this was a little different recommendation, because it was made having in mind the fact of their early retirement.

Senator WARREN. Are you quite sure that the description here will only include four officers?

General HARBORD. There is a fifth man about whom there might be some question.

Senator WARREN. However, any of these men would require nomination.

General HARBORD. Nomination; yes.

Senator WARREN. Nomination and confirmation?

General HARBORD. Yes; undoubtedly.

The CHAIRMAN. I have not criticized the bill, taken of and by itself. The committee, however, had a discussion of this bill in executive session. I think about three weeks ago. In that discussion we went over the whole problem of suitable rewards, in the way of promotion upon the retired list or retirement with promotion, for officers who distinguished themselves during the war. The committee recollected that it had reported on other occasions, and that the Senate had passed bills, one of which, for example, authorized the President to retire General Crowder when he should be retired with the rank of lieutenant general on the retired list, as a recognition of his services as provost marshal of the draft, which was certainly extraordinarily well performed. He was recruiting officer for an immense Army, and the way that selective service law was administered certainly reflected immense credit upon the man who stood at the top of the organization.

Now, that bill passed the Senate, but failed in the House under rather unfortunate circumstances, as I recollect it. It reached the floor of the House and a good deal of contention arose. I think it was recommitted. At any rate it failed.

Then this committee also reported a bill providing for the retirement, with the grade of lieutenant general, of Generals Liggett and Bullard. I think on

one occasion this committee reported a bill including Generals Liggett, Bullard, and March. At any rate, the bill for the promotion in that way of Generals Liggett and Bullard was passed by the Senate. This committee recollected that General Liggett was a major general in the Regular Army before he went into the war. During the war he rose to the temporary rank of lieutenant general commanding a field army. Next to General Pershing, he had the heaviest responsibilities of the front line of any American officer, and he commanded more men even than General Grant did in the Civil War, and he did it exceedingly well. At the conclusion of the war, of course, he had to surrender his temporary grade or commission of lieutenant general and revert to the rank of major general, with which he started. He has come out of the war with no reward or recognition of any kind from his country.

A somewhat similar statement can be made about General Bullard, who, I think, was a brigadier general.

General HARBORD. No; not at the outbreak of the war. He was made a brigadier general in June of that year.

The CHAIRMAN. Very shortly after our entry into the war he became a brigadier general in the Regular Army. In France, however, General Bullard rose very quickly to the command of a division. He commanded the famous First Division for a considerable period. He then rose to command a corps and finally a field army. He was in command of the Second Field Army in the Meuse-Argonne operations and acquitted himself with great distinction. In the meantime he reached the grade of major general in the Regular Army by the usual course. So that while it can be said of General Bullard that he came out of the war with a higher permanent rank than the one he had when he went in, nevertheless his services in the war were extraordinarily conspicuous and there has been no reward or special recognition extended to him by the Congress for those services.

Now, those three officers, Generals Crowder, Liggett, and Bullard, have been selected by the Senate at least as worthy of special distinction. General Pershing is the only officer in the entire Army who has received any special recognition at the hands of Congress. I, for one, have felt very deeply about these other three officers, and the introduction of this bill, which has the support of the War Department, brought to my mind and to the minds of other Senators, that situation. After the committee discussion of about three weeks ago, and with the informal authorization and consent of the committee, I wrote a letter to the Secretary of War pointing out the history of these three officers, who had failed of any recognition whatsoever, and asking if the War Department could not make some study of the situation in a general way and make some suggestion to us which would enable us to introduce, and possibly to pass, legislation which would cover these exceptional cases.

Now, it might be entirely possible—I am sure it would be entirely proper—to include in such legislation provisions which would cover cases similar to those of Colonel Nicholson, Colonel Brett, Colonel McDonald, and Colonel Dugan. Frankly, my dread has been that we would experience, during the next 10, 15, or 20 years, the introduction of special bills for officers, and that we would get into a position where the officer with the most friends would get legislation for his benefit, and the officer who was remote, living far away and did not happen to have friends in Congress, would not get recognition.

Now, I am not making these observations in any criticism of Colonels Brett, Nicholson, Dugan, or McDonald in the slightest degree, but it is a situation that this committee will have to face sooner or later.

Senator WARREN. Did you receive an answer to that letter?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. The answer was to the effect that while the suggestion contained in my letter was worthy of consideration, nevertheless the department seemed to feel that this bill should be passed, in view of the especially high qualifications demanded of the beneficiaries.

General HARBORD. The actual matter of the study of that question of men who ought to receive the kind of reward to which you have alluded has been turned over to General Pershing. The Secretary felt that naturally General Pershing was the only man with a viewpoint on all the rest of the Army, and I think the matter will eventually reach you in the form of a recommendation from the Secretary of War, based on final study made by him and General Pershing.

Senator BURSUM. Would this bill cover cases like those you mention?

The CHAIRMAN. No.

Senator BURSUM. This only covers a situation where they have had 40 years' service. That is considerable, is it not?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

General HARBORD. If it is proper, I would like to say that, of course, the Army would feel very much gratified if history did not repeat itself in such action by Congress as was taken after the Civil War. Congress denied lieutenant generalcies to such men as Thomas and Meade, and others of that class, when the memory of their deeds was still fresh in the minds of the people and while they were still on earth, but in later years gave it to men who did not rise above the grade of low field officers of the Civil War; it gave us a succession of lieutenant generals in the early part of this century, presumably for services in the Civil War, because there wasn't enough in their other services to have warranted it—men who were not known at all and would not have been thought of as more than aides-de-camp to men like Thomas and Meade.

Senator WARREN. When that law was passed it was without reference to the record of anybody, but with the idea that the Chief of Staff ought to be of higher grade than those over whom he had command; that the Chief of Staff ought to be a lieutenant general. It went on that way and took in by appointment other men, until it was finally dispensed with.

General HARBORD. There were one or two of them that never became Chief of Staff. General McArthur was not Chief of Staff and neither was General Corbin.

Senator WARREN. I thought General Corbin was.

General HARBORD. Not Chief of Staff; no.

Senator WARREN. I mean what they call Chief of Staff here in the department.

The CHAIRMAN. He was Adjutant General.

General HARBORD. We feel that congressional recognition should come to a man when he is alive; that it is much better to have it come then than to have it come in the form of an epitaph.

We have now in the hospital, dying, General McAndrew, who was recommended by General Pershing for a lieutenant generalcy in France in 1918.

The CHAIRMAN. And who was an extraordinarily able officer.

General HARBORD. Yes, sir; and his condition to-day is no doubt due to the work he performed for this Government.

The CHAIRMAN. There is no doubt about it.

General HARBORD. And he has been dying in the hospital for months. He is sinking steadily. He is absolutely paralyzed and can not even clear his own throat. That is what the doctors tell me. Now, if some recognition could come to that man before he died, of course, it would mean something, mean a great deal more than it would to have it come 10 years from now.

The CHAIRMAN. You have brought up another case, General, that appeals to me immensely. It is a pity, when we are considering legislation of this kind, that we can not cover the ground a little more generally and establish a policy. My recollection is, and Senator Warren will correct me if I am wrong, that several years after the Civil War—I forget how long afterwards—Congress passed an act to the effect that the officers of the Regular Army who had served as officers during the Civil War, upon retirement, should be retired at one higher grade.

Senator WARREN. That went up to brigadiers.

The CHAIRMAN. That was a general policy laid down, and it was done many years after the war, was it not, after 1890?

Senator WARREN. It was done since I have been in the Senate.

General HARBORD. It was after 1890, after I came in the Army.

Senator WARREN. It was 1893, 1894, or 1895.

The CHAIRMAN. And during that period, from 1865 to the nineties, a large number of distinguished officers died without any reward.

General HARBORD. The men who had had the hardest service nearly all died. I do not doubt that 20 years from now Congress will be making a lot of third-raters and fourth-raters lieutenant generals.

The CHAIRMAN. That is what I am afraid of. I am afraid of special bills. I am not afraid of this one, because this is a good bill.

General HARBORD. I think it is a good bill. I think these men deserve this, and they ought to have it. Of course, I haven't the viewpoint and could not have the viewpoint that you gentlemen have of it, as to the way it might affect some general proposition or reward later on.

The CHAIRMAN. The next bill which will be introduced will prescribe qualifications not quite as high as these, and it may be successful. At least there will be a very large number of these bills introduced in the next 10 years, a

very large number. My hope is that we can at this comparatively early date settle on a policy which is generous but of such a nature that it will not be invaded and destroyed by special efforts.

Senator WARREN. That is a high ideal, Mr. Chairman, and I admire it, and I wish we could do that. But we are coming and going—or, rather, we are going and others are coming—and it will be the same thing. The committee will have to decide upon the merits of each one of these various cases in spite of anything that you can do as to policy. I remember that legislation bestowed additional rank to all men up to the grade of brigadier general. Of course, that was rather general and was conceded to be, and it brought in, naturally, a lot of those officers who received another promotion. A good many of them were men who had been retired, and then we had to go down the list afterwards and put those up.

Senator BURSUM. The requirements of this bill are so stringent that it must have been drawn to cover just a few cases.

General HARBORD. It only covers four cases.

The CHAIRMAN. It was drawn to cover two cases especially, and happened to take in two others.

General HARBORD. In this connection, as to rewards in general, we have already had an inquiry in the War Department from the chairman of the Military Committee of the House, as to the numbers that would be affected by legislation which might give every officer who had served thirty years, and then retired, and who had not in the meantime reached the grade of general officer, the highest grade that he had had during the war; in other words, to make everybody a general on retirement who had been a general during the war and who did not get that grade on the regular list.

The CHAIRMAN. That suggestion has been made and considered very seriously.

Senator WARREN. How many would that cover?

General HARBORD. I think it would cover about 50 men, if they all live. None of them were made generals.

The CHAIRMAN. If they all live and have completed 30 years of commissioned service.

General HARBORD. Yes. The additional expense would only be several hundred thousand dollars. Of course a large number of men will undoubtedly reach the grade of brigadier general on the active list.

The CHAIRMAN. And they would have it anyway.

General HARBORD. Yes.

Senator WARREN. It is a matter of \$750 for each one on the retired list——

General HARBORD. I think that is about the difference between colonels and brigadiers, but I do not know exactly.

Senator WARREN. On the retired list I think it would amount to that, but that is just a rough, offhand statement.

General HARBORD. That has not appeared in the form of any legislation, but just an inquiry from Mr. Kahn, of the Military Affairs Committee of the House, as to the numbers that would be affected.

The CHAIRMAN. There has been a good deal of discussion of that suggestion, that those that reached the rank of general officer during the war should be accorded that rank when they retired. That would cover these four officers, would it not?

Senator WARREN. Oh, yes; of course.

General HARBORD. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there anything else that you would like to emphasize with regard to this general question, General?

General HARBORD. No, sir; nothing else occurs to me.

Senator WARREN. Do you think the department gives this its entire approbation?

General HARBORD. Yes; this bill, I am quite sure of it.

Senator BURSUM. Could not this bill be amended so as to cover the other situation, in order to save a consideration of other bills?

The CHAIRMAN. It is possible, of course, to use this bill as a vehicle, by extensive amendment and redrafting of it.

Senator BURSUM. It is easier to pass one bill than it is to pass two bills sometimes.

General HARBORD. I do not know to what state that study which is being made of the general subject has progressed. I have asked General Pershing about it several times, and he told me he was making a list, and I think the Secretary will be disposed to handle it very promptly.

The CHAIRMAN. I want it understood that my observations are not prompted by any hostility to this bill as such, but its introduction does open up a vista that we will have to examine. We thank you, General Harbord.

STATEMENT OF MR. ASHBY WILLIAMS.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I came here, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, just to say a word in behalf of General Brett, from the standpoint of a civilian in the war. I went into the Army as a captain, through the grade of major, and finally reached the grade of colonel. I served during the entire war under Colonel Brett, first at Camp Meade, and later in the sector of the Meuse-Argonne. I can not, of course, say anything to you about the policy of the bill or anything of that sort, but I simply want you gentlemen to know that I speak in behalf of 7,000 or 8,000 men and officers who served under Colonel Brett.

The civilians, especially civilian officers, who served during the war, had not been tied up with any military ideals before they went in, and the result was that we found the civilian officer was a very apt critic of military matters and men. And I can say to you gentlemen in absolute frankness and sincerity that General Brett never received a criticism so far as I ever heard or knew. That is an extremely exceptional case because we were more than apt to criticise not only the man's personality but his military ability.

General Brett's military qualities were appreciated by the civilians who served under him and he inspired the utmost confidence. It was a matter of common talk among the outfit. Take, for example, the movement which he executed on the 1st of November, up in the Meuse-Argonne battle. The Three hundred and twenty-fifth Infantry was in front, organized in columns of battalions. The barrage was put down too far ahead of the leading outfit, so that when they got up to move forward the Germans popped up from shell holes and tore the outfit all to pieces. The battalion commander was killed and it looked like a holdup; but General Brett executed a very wonderful and very prompt flank movement by throwing the Three hundred and nineteenth Infantry on the left flank and flanking the Germans. That prompt and decisive action enabled the line to move on and by the next morning we were following the Germans in trucks.

Now, those things sift through to the men, and every man in the outfit swore by General Brett.

I can make one statement further than that, and that is that every man in the outfit loved Colonel Brett and still loves him. I know that every man in his outfit who served under him feels to-day, whether he is right or not, that the passage of this bill is not a matter of gratuity but of common justice, and they are all anxious to see it done.

General Brett had the reputation of studying his field service regulations for half an hour before breakfast every morning and of being a thorough master of military tactics. There is absolutely no suggestion of anything wrong with his character or conduct. I recall one instance where one of my kitchens got stuck in the mud and General Brett got down off of his car and put his shoulder to the wheel and helped pull it out. Of course he was getting old and not very strong, but his interest was just as much as that of the other men, and they pushed the wagon out.

So that I say to you, gentlemen, in all sincerity, that 7,000 or 8,000 men feel that the passage of this bill is not a matter of gratuity but a matter of justice to General Brett.

(Whereupon the committee proceeded to the consideration of other business.)

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